

NMSSA Report 22-IN-3

INSIGHTS FOR TEACHERS

3

NMSSA English 2019
MULTIMODAL TEXTS AND CRITICAL LITERACY



NMSSA

Wānangata te putanga tauria
National Monitoring Study
of Student Achievement



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NMSSA Report 22-IN-3: Insights for Teachers 3. NMSSA English 2019 – Multimodal Texts and Critical Literacy

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CONTENTS

Part 1: The NMSSA English Assessment	4
What is NMSSA?	4
The 2019 NMSSA English assessment	4
Reading, listening and viewing: the assessment approach	6
Reading, listening and viewing scales	6
How did students do on the assessments?	7
Part 2: Multimodal Thinking and Critical Literacy	8
Insight 1: Making meaning in English involves using information from different modalities	9
– Describing how – through visual, linguistic, and audio modes – a film maker portrays an object	10
– Explaining how suspense is created through linguistic, visual, and audio modes in a film	12
– Drawing on information from linguistic and visual modes to interpret character in a picture book	14
– Evaluating the use of font size to convey meaning	17
– Drawing on information from linguistic/print and visual modes to make meaning of a poem	18
Summary for Insight 1	20
Insight 2: Making meaning in English involves critically analysing text – not just taking it at face value	21
– Finding evidence in a story of the author’s point of view	22
– Considering the potential impact on a story of an alternative authorial point of view of visual texts	25
– Evaluating the impact of a poem on the readers’ awareness of an environmental issue	28
– Analysing the representation of a film character, and the purpose of this representation	30
– Analysing the representation of picture book characters	32
Summary for Insight 2	34
Appendix	35

The purpose of this report

This report is designed to support the teaching of English in primary and intermediate classrooms. It draws on insights generated from the assessment of the English learning area by the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) in 2019. The report focuses on critical literacy and working with multimodal texts within the making meaning strand of the English learning area.

This is the third report in a series of four, based on the English assessment findings.

The full set of reports includes:

- Insights for Teachers 1. NMSSA English 2019. Creating Meaning.
- Insights for Teachers 2. NMSSA English 2019. Making Meaning.
- Insights for Teachers 3. NMSSA English 2019. Multimodal Texts and Critical Literacy.
- Insights for Teachers 4. NMSSA English 2019. Writing for an Audience.

These reports will be useful to teachers and curriculum designers working with the English learning area of the New Zealand Curriculum.

Report 3 is organised into two parts. Part 1 briefly introduces NMSSA and the NMSSA assessment of the making meaning strand. Part 2 presents insights about teaching and learning associated with critical literacy across reading, writing and viewing in English.

PART 1: The NMSSA English Assessment

What is NMSSA?

The National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) is designed to assess student achievement across the *New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC), (Ministry of Education, 2007) at Year 4 and Year 8 in New Zealand English-medium state and state-integrated schools. Each year, nationally representative samples of students from 100 schools at each of these two year levels are assessed in one or more learning areas. Components of the English learning area were assessed in 2012 (writing) 2014 (reading), and 2015 (listening and viewing). English was assessed as a single learning area in 2019.



The 2019 NMSSA English assessment

To assess the English learning area in 2019, the NMSSA project team developed a multi-part assessment focused on the two English strands – making-meaning, and creating-meaning. The assessments included multi-choice and short answer questions, extended response items, one-to-one interviews, and individual and paired performance tasks.

Central to the study of English are literary texts (fiction and creative non-fiction) which use language in aesthetic, imaginative and engaging ways to entertain, engender emotion, express identity and invite reflection. The NMSSA study focused on student interpretation and creation of written, oral and visual language 'literary' texts. This included interpretation of extracts of fiction texts (such as novels, short stories, plays, poems, picture books) presented in different forms (print, audio, static image, film) and creation of written, spoken and visual texts with an emphasis on purpose and audience.

An assessment framework encompassing the indicators from the English learning area in the New Zealand curriculum provided a guide for the development of tasks, see Table 1.1 on the following page.





Table 1.1: Constructs for the making-meaning and creating-meaning strands for assessing the English learning area

Making meaning Reading • Listening • Viewing		Creating meaning Writing • Speaking • Presenting	
Construct	Definition	Construct	Definition
Locate and recall*	Can identify the information, ideas and features of print, oral and visual texts.	Construct and convey ideas	Can convey ideas and information through print, oral and visual texts for a range of purposes and audiences.
Interpret*	Can interpret print, oral, and visual texts by integrating text features and ideas, considering the relationship between ideas and text features, and by making inferences.	Express ideas with detail and colour	Can integrate text features and ideas when creating written, oral and visual texts. Can engage the reader, listener or viewer through use of communicative features specific to the mode. Can employ imagery and allusion.
Critically analyse*	Can critically analyse print, oral and visual texts by questioning texts rather than taking them at face value. This involves considering the construction of texts; questions of inclusion, exclusion and representation; and the ways in which texts can position a reader.	Critically analyse	Can analyse their own processes and impact of presentations, questioning the features used, and evaluating their effectiveness. Can make deliberate choices of text structure, register and tone and use specific oral, visual or written language features to position the reader, viewer or listener.

* These constructs were adapted (in a minor way) from the constructs used in Cycle 1 English assessments



Reading, listening and viewing: the assessment approach

Reading, listening and viewing were assessed separately using different combinations of approaches.

The NMSSA reading assessment

English reading was assessed in two parts. The first part required the students to read a selection of fiction, literary non-fiction, or poetry passages, and then complete some questions using selected-response or short, constructed-response formats. Some students later participated in a second part, a one-to-one interview to discuss their understandings further.

The NMSSA listening assessment

Students listened to recorded oral texts and answered selected-response and short constructed-response questions that followed each text. A range of fiction and literary non-fiction texts were used, including extracts from novels and plays, scripted conversation, expository texts and memoirs.

The NMSSA viewing assessment

English viewing was assessed in two parts. In the first part, students responded to visual texts with static images from picture books and graphic novels. In the second part, they viewed a selection of moving images (short film clips) presented on laptops and answered questions with short constructed responses. The moving images included an adaptation from a novel, animated fiction, and a short live-action narrative.

Reading, listening and viewing scales

The student responses to the reading, listening and viewing assessments were used to construct a series of measurement scales.

These were called the

- Reading in the English Learning Area (RELA) scale
- Listening in the English Learning Area (LELA) scale
- Viewing in the English Learning Area (VELA) scale

The scale descriptions are a direct reflection of what was assessed, and how relatively hard or easy students found the content of the assessment. The descriptions show how students' skills increase in sophistication as the scale score increases. They also outline what the students typically know and can do when they score in each part of the scale.

The scale descriptions were produced to give a strong sense of how the English learning area was assessed in each mode.

The scales can be viewed in the Appendix on pages 36–38.



How did students do on the assessments?

Reading

Figure 2.1 shows how the students achieved on the 2019 NMSSA reading assessment.

The study found that over half of the students (63 percent at Year 4, and 56 percent at Year 8) were achieving at or above the expected curriculum level.

There was no statistically significant change in scores in reading between 2014 and 2019.

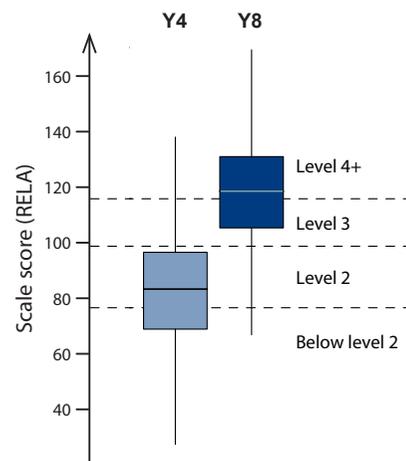


Figure 2.1: Distribution of scores on the Reading in the English Learning Area (RELA) scale

Listening

Figure 2.2 shows that about three quarters (76 percent) of the Year 4 students achieved at curriculum level 2 or above and at Year 8 about two thirds (65 percent) of the students achieved at curriculum level 4.

There was no statistically significant change in scores in listening between 2015 and 2019.

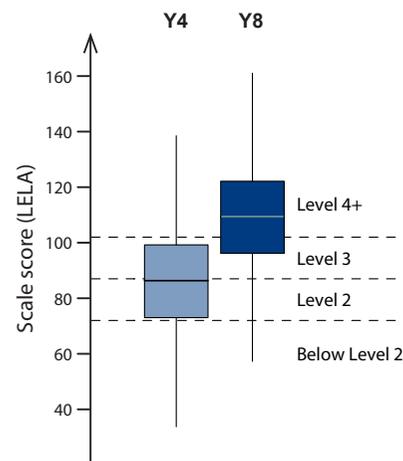


Figure 2.2: Distribution of scores on the Listening in the English Learning Area (LELA) scale

Viewing

Figure 2.3 shows how the students achieved on the 2019 NMSSA viewing assessment.

The study found that 78 percent of Year 4 students achieved at curriculum level 2 or above.

At Year 8, 65 percent of students achieved at curriculum level 4 or above. We were not able to compare 2015 and 2019 scores for viewing.

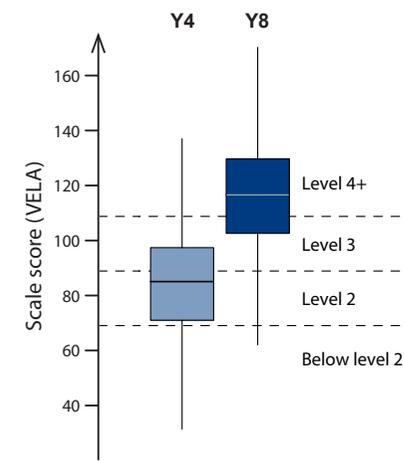


Figure 2.3: Distribution of scores on the Viewing in the English Learning Area (VELA) scale



PART 2: Multimodal texts and critical literacy

This Insight report focuses on making meaning of multimodal texts and on critical literacy in the English learning area.

Why focus on multimodal texts?

According to *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007):

English is the study, use and enjoyment of the English language and its literature, communicated orally, visually and in writing for a range of purposes and audiences in a variety of text forms (p. 18).

It also states that, through the English learning area:

Students appreciate and enjoy texts in all their forms (p. 18).

In previous years, reading, listening and viewing as part of NMSSA were assessed separately. However, most texts in today's world are multimodal. To use these texts, students need the capacity to not only make meaning of words, images and sound, but to interpret how these modalities and their different elements are combined for certain purposes. It is therefore important that we assess for these capacities. The NMSSA English assessment enables us to do this, and so to report on students' capacity to make meaning of multimodal texts.

Why focus on critical literacy?

The NZC states that in the English learning area students will 'learn to deconstruct and critically analyse text' (p. 18) and show an understanding of 'how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences' (NZC fold-out charts). In previous years, NMSSA assessments of reading, listening, and viewing included a focus on critical thinking but did not have an explicit focus on critical literacy. In the 2019 NMSSA English assessment, we have developed a small number of new items to address this gap. The second insight in this report presents our findings about students' capacity to critically analyse text.

Insight 1:

Making meaning in English involves using information from different modalities

9

Insight 2:

Making meaning in English involves critically analysing text – not just taking it at face value

21

1 INSIGHT

Making meaning in English involves using information from different modalities

Introduction

Most texts are multi-modal, that is, they make use of more than one language mode to convey a message. For example, a movie consists of moving images, sound effects, spoken dialogue, and may also include written text in the form of subtitles. A picture book consists of images and written words. Even a traditional print text has visual elements related to the use of font, spacing and layout on the page. In the English learning area, students need to know how to draw on the information from all modalities when making meaning of texts. What follows is an analysis of student capacity to do this based on responses to different tasks from the 2019 NMSSA English assessment.



1

Describing how – through visual, linguistic, and audio modes – a film maker portrays an object

Video: *Tales from the mythologies of Creation, Māui and Aoraki.* John Broughton (script).¹
(Task name: *Māui's Catch*)

Students at both Year 4 and Year 8 viewed an excerpt from a film animation telling the story of Māui fishing up the North Island of Aotearoa.

In the excerpt, we see Māui and his brothers in a waka paddling out to sea. The waka slows down and the narrator reads, “Ah, said Māui, Ko tēnei te wāhi – this is the place. Tāku matau, said Māui. My fish hook.” We see Māui reach down into the waka and bring up something glowing in his hands. The camera zooms in and we see the fishhook in Māui’s hands, viewed from above. It glows brightly in Māui’s hands and ambient music plays in the background. The camera zooms in further for a close-up. The narrator reads, “Māui made the fishhook from the jawbone of his grandmother.” The fish hook then moves out of Māui’s hands and spins in the air to land on an image of the grandmother’s face, to fit along her jawline. Ambient music plays. We then see Māui casting his line and hear a splash followed by a magical sounding ‘ding’ when the fishhook hits the water. We watch the glowing fishhook sinking slowly through the water with ambient music playing in the background, followed by a moment of silence.

Students were asked:

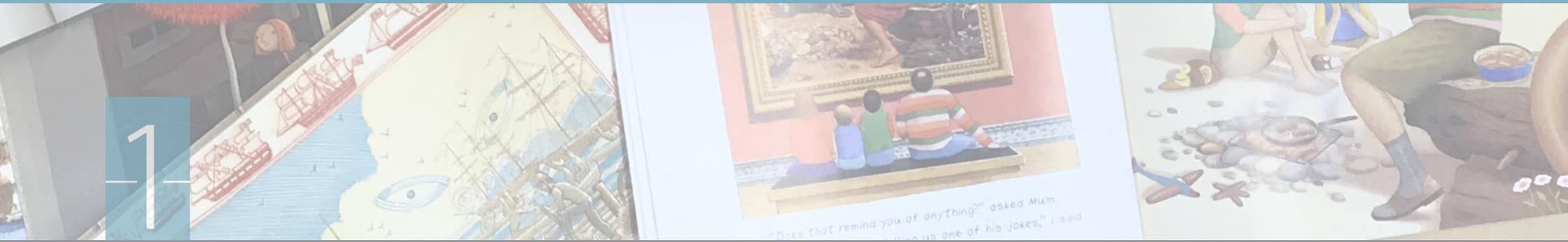
What did the film maker do to help you understand that Māui’s fishhook, his grandmother’s jawbone, was special? Describe two ways the film maker did this.

Students responses could score 0, 1, or 2.

Student responses scored 1 if they identified at least two techniques the film maker used, for example ‘it glowed’, ‘it made a tinkling sound’, or ‘they showed it pulling up the North Island’.

Student responses scored 2 if they identified two techniques used and explained their use.

¹ Animation Research Ltd. (Virtual Eye). (2012, July 2). *Tales from the mythologies of Creation, Māui and Aoraki.* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6q8E1aQjY>.



Examples of student responses. Score = 2

- it was glowing while it went down to the bottom
- they zoomed in on the hook with dramatic music

Y8

- ~~It~~ It was glowing in his hands. looked shiny like a taonga.
- There was quieter when the hook dropped. That made more suspense

Y8

- It was shining like the fish hook knew there was a fish.
- When Māui threw the fish hook in the water as it hit the water it made a 'ding' kind of sound

Y8

- It was glowing.
- It made some ambient noise when he casted it

Y8

Over half (58 percent) of the Year 4 responses scored 1. Very few (3 percent) scored 2. The Year 8 students found this question easier, with just under two-thirds of responses (65 percent) scoring 1 and a small proportion (14 percent) scoring 2.

Responses scored 0 for a range of reasons, including failure to answer the question or simply repeating the information given in the question (e.g., 'It was his grandmother's jawbone'). Some responses scored 0 because they lacked specificity (e.g., 'It looked cool').

1

Explaining how suspense is created through linguistic, visual, and audio modes in a film

Video: *The Silent One*. Joy Cowley (Author), Ian Mune (Screenplay).²
(Task name: *Jonasi's Underwater Catch*)

Students at both Year 4 and Year 8 viewed an excerpt from a film adaptation of the book *The Silent One* by Joy Cowley.

In the excerpt, the main character, Jonasi, sees a glowing light in the water under his canoe. To find out what it is, he repeatedly dives into the water and then surfaces for breath. Each time the glow eludes him, until finally it comes into view, revealing it is caused by the light reflecting off the shell of a turtle. The film maker uses sound, music, lighting, camera angles and the boy's facial expressions to build suspense.

Students were asked:

The film maker has created suspense in this scene. This means that they built up to the surprise of Jonasi finding the turtle. Describe two ways the film maker did this.

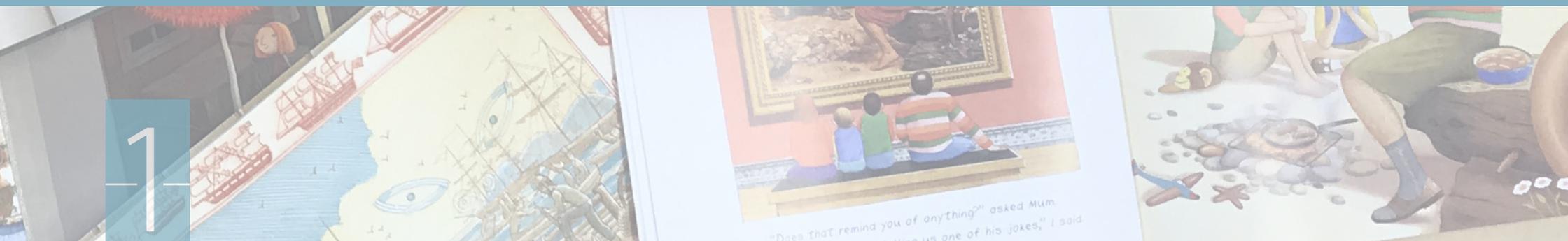
Student responses could score 0, 1, 2, or 3.

Responses scored 1 if they identified two techniques (e.g., 'the music,' 'the light') but did not explain the use of these techniques.

Responses scored 2 if they identified and explained two techniques but did not describe how these were used to build suspense (e.g., 'the music got louder,' or 'the light flickered').

Responses scored 3 if they identified two techniques and explained two techniques and described how the film maker used these techniques to build suspense.

² Cowley, J. (Author). Mune, I. (Screenplay). Mackay, Y. (Director). (1989). *The Silent One*. [Film]. Gibson, D. (Producer).



Examples of student responses. Score = 3

• When the camera was behind the man (Jonas) that gave a feeling that someone/thing was watching him.

Y8

• He used the music to build up then a drop of music to surprise Jonas.
• He switch camera angles to make it feel ~~more~~ more intense

Y8

• Suddenly making the music more eerie and strange, giving us stranger sounds that we normally don't hear.
• Making the turtle sneak up on him in first person so we don't know what the creature is.

Y8

• By not showing what he found when he found it they just showed his expression.

• The music kind of built up to the moment he saw the turtle

Y8

The Year 4 students found this task difficult. Less than half (43 percent) scored 1, a small proportion scored 2 (9 percent), and a very small proportion (2 percent) scored 3.

The Year 8 students found this task slightly easier. Less than half (41 percent) scored 1, just under one-third scored 2 (32 percent), and a small proportion (8 percent) scored 3.

Responses that scored 0 tended to describe the events that happened in the excerpt (e.g., 'the turtle appeared' or 'Jonas swam quickly away') rather than identifying the techniques used.

1



Drawing on information from linguistic and visual modes to interpret character in a picture book

Text: *Donkeys*. Adelheid Dahimene (Author), Catherine Chidgey (Translator), Heide Stollinger (Illustrator).³

Year 8 students viewed an image from a picture book of a brown donkey (Jack) following along behind a grey donkey (Jenny). Jenny's facial expression and body language suggest she feels superior to Jack and does not want to be followed. Jack's facial expression and body language suggests he is more of an indecisive, weak 'follower' type character. The text on the page reads 'Jenny headed South and Jack headed... South!'

Students were asked:

How does the written text add to the meaning of the image?

Student responses could score 0, 1, or 2.

Responses scored 1 if they identified information provided in the text, not found in the image.

Examples of student responses. Score = 1

so that you know that they are going south.

Y8

They are copying one another.

Y8

Responses scored 2 if they demonstrated an understanding of Jenny's and Jack's personality, or their relationship, by drawing attention to the use of ellipsis, the use of the exclamation mark, or the effect of understatement created through the repetition of the words 'headed south'. On this and the following page are seven responses that scored 2 to illustrate the range of possible responses to this complex question.

Examples of student responses. Score = 2

it is although JACK is following her, the epilipsies show that he ~~is checking where~~ isn't sure where to go but then he realises Jenny is going south so he follows

Y8

because Jack seems to look around and slowly follow Jenny and the... means that the writer is trying to make it sound like the author is surprised

Y8

It is stated very clearly what Jenny's going, but there is a pause in between Jack's headed and south as if Jack is not sure about where he's going

Y8

³ Dahimene, A. (Writer), Chidgey, C. (Translator) & Stollinger, H (Illustrator). (2009). *Donkeys*. Sydney: Gecko Press, New Zealand

1



Examples of student responses. Score = 2

by Having the ~~two~~ it symbolises
that Jenny doesn't want Jack coming

Y8

Because the ~~ellipses mean~~ text
stated the Jenny headed south
and the ellipses are sort of
portraying the idea that Jack
was copying or going the same
annoying direction and the exclamation
mark ~~also makes~~ has a meaning
that Jenny was not too
impressed with Jack going
the same way.

Y8

When I look at the image I see that,
~~It~~ it is ok ~~of~~ for Jenny to head south.
But the ~~writer~~ adds an exclamation mark
when ~~to~~ Jack headed south!

Y8

It adds names and characters to the
donkeys and the text shows it's
surprising that Jack followed with the
exclamation mark, and ellipse.

Y8

Just over one-third (39 percent) of responses scored 1, and only a small proportion (8 percent) scored 2.

Responses that scored 0 tended to suggest that the written text gave the same information as the visual text or were not specific about the additional information provided by the text (e.g., 'It is like the same, but with words' or 'It gives you information').



1

Evaluating the use of font size to convey meaning

Text: Swee Tan (2012) as cited in *My Happy Place*. Melissa Mebus (Author).⁴
(Task name: *What Makes Me Happy*)

This next example comes from a print text with no illustrations. The visual component of the text comes in the use of font size.

Year 4 students read the following text:

What makes me happy is watching things **groW**.

In the context of an interview with a teacher assessor, students were asked:

Do you think the writer's idea to write 'grow' like that is a good idea? Explain why you think this.

Student responses could score 0 or 1.

Responses scored 1 if they indicated an understanding of the relationship between the meaning of the word 'grow' and the visual appearance of the word typographically.

Yes [it is a good idea]. When you grow something, it starts off really small and then it grows bigger and bigger and bigger. And that's what they've done with the words.

Y4

Most students were able to carry out this task successfully with 63 percent of students scoring 1.

Responses scored 0 if they showed lack of understanding of the relationship between the meaning of the words and their visual appearance (e.g., 'the writer made a mistake' or 'it means you have to say the word *grow* louder').

In the task just described, the relationship between the meaning and the visual appearance of the word 'grow' and its arrangement on the page is concrete. In the next text example, *Acrostic Poem* (p. 18), the relationship between the meaning and the visual appearance of the words is much more subtle, and the ideas being conveyed are more sophisticated.

⁴ Cited in Mebus, M., & KidsCan Charitable Trust. (2013). *My happy place: A book of joy, aroha and generosity*. ZIN Publishing, New Zealand.

1

Drawing on information from linguistic/print and visual modes to make meaning of a poem

Text: *Acrostic poem.* Tim Upperton (Author).⁵

The Year 8 students read a poem comparing ideas escaping from the constraints of the poem's acrostic form with wild animals escaping from a cage. The layout of the words at this point in the poem—the second verse—mirrors the meaning, with the words arranged haphazardly, breaking the ordered layout of the first verse.

Students were asked:

The words in the second half of the poem are set out differently from the first. What important idea in the poem does this different form help to show?

Student responses could score 0 or 1.

Responses scored 1 if they showed understanding that the haphazard layout of the words in the second verse represents the metaphorical idea of ideas/words breaking out of the constraints of the acrostic form (as illustrated in the first example adjacent) or the more literal idea of lions breaking out of a cage (as illustrated in the subsequent examples).

In general, students found this question difficult. Only 22 percent scored 1.

Examples of student responses. Score = 1

The ideas/words have broken out and are spilling across the page.

Y8

that the lions have escaped so there everywhere just like the second verse

Y8

that the words are no longer in a normal positioning, like the 'lions have broken out' As the fence is broken

Y8

well the writer said each line is a wire to keep the animals in so they can't get out, then the lions got out, therefore the wire has been broken up.

Y8

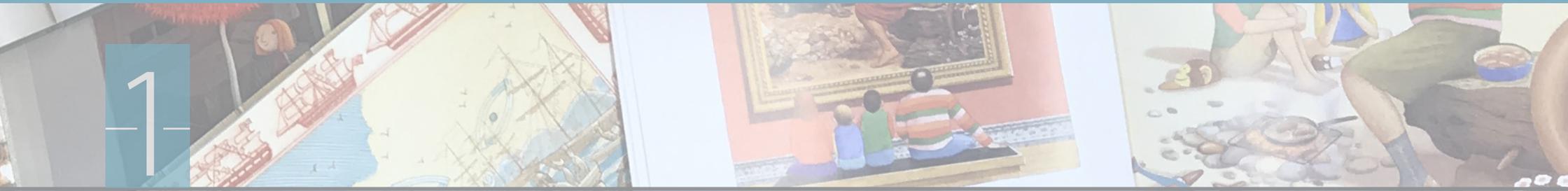
The idea that words should not be bound tightly. They should be free to roam.

Y8

that there are gaps in the fence wire

Y8

⁵ Upperton, T. (2018). *Acrostic Poem.* *School Journal, Level 3, August 2018* (p.14).



Due to the large proportion of students who scored 0, it is worth analysing the types of errors students made in some detail. Many students stated that the writer changed the layout of the words to follow the acrostic form of the poem.

Examples of student responses. Score = 0

The writer needed to write those things but the words didn't fit so the writer had to write them differently.

Y8

That some don't fit into the letter pattern but it wouldn't sound right if they didn't put the extra words in.

Y8

That you can use more words than you need by putting them in between the lines.

Y8

The line might not make sense which leaves a gap to be filled.

Y8

These responses suggest a lack of understanding of the main message of the poem (that ideas should not or cannot be constrained by a poem's acrostic form) and of the agency of the writer to break conventions for effect.

Some students stated that the writer changed the layout of the words to make the poem more interesting. Again, these student responses suggest a lack of understanding of the relationship between its function and form.

Examples of student responses. Score = 0

The words are set out differently ~~better~~ to add dramatic effect.

Y8

So it feels like it will pop out at you. A different way to write for interest.

Y8

1

Summary for Insight 1

What do these findings illustrate?

Overall, the findings from the tasks presented here, and across the making meaning tasks more generally, suggest that most students can draw on the information from multiple modes to make meaning of text when:

- the information or ideas portrayed through each mode supports or supplements the information or ideas portrayed in the other mode(s)
- the information from each mode is expressed in concrete terms
- the message being conveyed is literal.

Sometimes, however, one language or design feature is used to subvert another to create effects such as irony or humour, for example when the illustration gives a different message from the words in a picture book. In such cases, the relationship between the ideas expressed through different modes provides an important source of information that we can use to make inferences from text.

The findings from the tasks presented here, and across the NMSSA making meaning tasks more generally, suggest that students find it more difficult to draw on the information from multiple modes to make meaning of text when:

- the information in one or more modes contradicts, subverts, or is inconsistent with the information or ideas portrayed in other modes
- the information is presented in abstract terms
- the message being conveyed is abstract.

What can teachers do in the classroom?

To help students build their capacity to draw on all modes of meaning when interpreting text, teachers can:

- ensure they expose students to a wide range of text types as part of their English programme (e.g., film, podcasts, theatre, dance, and online games) as well as print texts (e.g., picture books, novels, short stories, plays, and poems)
- provide students with extended opportunities to explore multimodal texts in depth by revisiting the same text over time
- teach students about the modes of meaning-making and the design elements associated with each mode (e.g., the visual mode of meaning-making includes design elements such as colour, perspective, vectors, foregrounding, and backgrounding)
- teach students the metalanguage needed for thinking and talking about multimodal texts, use this metalanguage in authentic contexts on an everyday basis, and encourage students to do the same
- provide students with opportunities to create a wide range of multimodal texts themselves
- provide students with opportunities to think, talk and write about how the design elements in their own and others' texts can be used to construct meaning.

2 INSIGHT

Making meaning in English involves critically analysing text – not just taking it at face value

Making meaning of text in the English learning area involves critically analysing text rather than taking it at face value. The capacity to critically analyse text gives us power over the text and agency as readers.

To critically analyse text, students need to understand that texts are not neutral.

- The text creator (e.g., the writer, illustrator, film maker) produces text in a particular social context, and for certain purposes and audiences. The text creator has a point of view or perspective.
- We can identify this point of view by investigating what is included in, and excluded from, the text; and by analysing how people, settings, objects, events, or ideas are represented in the text.

To critically analyse text, students also need to understand that readers are not neutral.

- The reader reads text in a particular social context and for certain purposes. Each reader draws on their own knowledge and experiences to make meaning of texts. Readers make sense of text differently.
- Texts can be interpreted in different ways. This does not mean that ‘anything goes’. Some readings are better supported by evidence than others.
- We can consider how the text might influence our thoughts, feelings and actions.
- Readers have agency. We can choose to read a text in different ways and for different purposes.

What follows is an analysis of student capacity to critically analyse text based on responses to the 2019 NMSSA English assessment. The following tasks focus on exploring the point of view of the author, and the inclusion, exclusion, and representation of people, settings, objects and ideas. Each section begins with a description of the text and the task followed by an analysis of the student responses.



2

Finding evidence in a story of the author's point of view

Text: *HoneyJoy and Cocoa-Pops*. John Henderson⁶

The Year 4 students read an excerpt from a story about a hen that gets taken from a free-range environment and put into a factory farm. The text is implicitly sympathetic to free-range farming and critical of factory farming.

The students were asked:

The writer most likely thinks it is wrong to keep hens in cages. How does the story show this?

Student responses could score 0 or 1.

Responses scored 1 if they described the hen's lack of physical or emotional well-being in the cage or described the contrast created in the story between the hen's previous happy, comfortable, free-range life, and its current unhappy and uncomfortable cage life, as in the last of the adjacent student responses.

Examples of student responses. Score = 1

It was a small cage so she couldn't move around. Y4

The cage hurts the hen's feet. Y4

Because the hens pecked her. Y4

She stopped laying eggs. Y4

Her tail feathers fell out. Y4

Because when the hen's in a cage she starts to get unhappy. Y4

Just under half (46 percent) of the students scored 1.

There was a wide variety of incorrect responses and a range of reasons why students scored 0. It is, therefore, worth taking some time to look more closely at these incorrect responses.

⁶ Henderson, J. (2011). Honey Joy and Cocoa-Pops. In Else.B. (Ed.) *Great Mates: 30 New Zealand stories for children*. (pp. 125-128). Auckland: Random House New Zealand.

2

Many of the reasons students scored 0 related to failing to correctly interpret the question or not answering the question being asked. Rather than answering the question, some students:

- stated their own opinion of whether hens should be kept in cages

Examples of student responses. Score = 0

Hens should go in cages, so they don't play around in the garden. Y4

Hens cannot be stuck in cages. They need to be free. Y4

It is mean and cruel. Y4

- described the reasons why they thought the hens in the story were being kept in cages

Examples of student responses. Score = 0

They just want the eggs. Y4

Because they will kill them. Y4

Examples of student responses. Score = 0

TO help hens. Y4

He likes hens. Y4

She is annoyed with her hens. Y4

- repeated the question rather than answering it with evidence from the text. (These responses show a lack of close reading. Nowhere in the text does the writer directly state their views on battery farming). These responses also show a lack of understanding that, in fiction, the writer tends to show, rather than tell, their world view.

Examples of student responses. Score = 0

By telling us that if you put something or someone in a cage it is wrong. Y4

The writer said it is wrong to keep hens in cages because if you keep hens in cages they won't have enough food or water to drink. Y4

2

Another common reason for scoring a 0 was when responses stated in very general terms how we know the author is against factory farming, but failed to identify evidence from the text to support these general statements.

Examples of student responses. Score = 0

By writing about chickens being put in cages. Y4

How she described it. Y4

she expressed her feelings. Y4



2

Considering the potential impact on a story of an alternative authorial point of view

Text: *Morning, Simon*. Shaun Barnett (Author)⁷

The Year 8 students read a story about Simon, a homeless boy living on the streets of Wellington. The text is sympathetic to the plight of the homeless. The students were asked:

If the author thought that homeless people are dangerous or annoying, how might the story have been different?

This task is more difficult than the Year 4 task described above as students need to not only consider the author's likely perspective but imagine how a different perspective might impact the text.

Responses could score 0 or 1.

Responses scored 1 if they suggested that:

- the author might represent Simon as behaving in less appealing, more antisocial ways.

Examples of student responses. Score = 1

He may have made the reader not sympathise with him but instead ^{may} have him harras people for money.

Y8

He would've added a bit more backstory and different use of language. And probably more violent words and actions of the character. And make the character just as bad as the kids who yelled at him.

Y8

Simon may have shown anger towards the kids or the driver.
Simon may have annoyed the people passing by.

Y8

Simons character would have been more aggressive and/or caused a crime

Y8

⁷ Barnett, S. (2011). *Morning, Simon*. In B. Else (Ed.) *Great Mates: 30 New Zealand stories*. Auckland: Random House New Zealand.

2

- other characters in the story might be portrayed as not liking Simon.

Examples of student responses. Score = 1

Simon would have been mean and Pleadly and no one would have liked him.

Y8

He would of made Simon meaner and made the bus driver look up and down at him.

Y8

He may have made Simon more aggressive or not had the bus driver defend him.

Y8

Just over half (53 percent) of the students scored 1.

As with the previous task described (p. 22), there was a wide variety of incorrect responses and a range of reasons why students scored 0. It is, therefore, worth taking some time to look more closely at these incorrect responses.

Responses scored 0 for a range of reasons. Some emphasised that Simon was a good person, rather than answering the question asked.

Examples of student responses. Score = 0

Simon is a nice person. It is very easy to know that because when the bus driver gave the cake to Simon he refused.

Y8

Simon is the invisible boy and very quiet. He doesn't bother anyone. Simon is the pure opposite of dangerous and annoying.

Y8

He wasn't asking anything, and he didn't seem dangerous because he was nice to the bus driver.

Y8

Some students concluded that the author might have openly stated negative views about homeless people, rather than describing how this story would have been different. Such responses show a lack of understanding of the narrative genre, of representation, and that authors of fiction tend to 'show' rather than 'tell'.

Examples of student responses. Score = 10

It would just tell us that being homeless is bad and you shouldn't live on the streets.

Y8

The author would've been stating all the negative things about homeless people.

Y8

2

Some students suggested changes to the story that would likely increase rather than decrease the reader's sympathy for Simon.

Examples of student responses. Score = 0

The story might change to a different setting where the homeless boy would get ~~bully~~ bullied or teased maybe. Y8

He would of had more people being rude to him and Simon being more sad. Y8

by making it more sad. like he ~~did~~ not had food and someone stole his money. Y8

He ^{will make} ~~will~~ people ~~will~~ bully him and frighten him. Y8

Everyone would stay away for Simon and everyone would forget about him. Y8

Some students concluded that the author would not include homelessness in the story at all, showing a lack of understanding of representation.

Examples of student responses. Score = 0

There won't be homelessness in this story. Y8

It wouldn't be a story about an innocent child who is homeless. Y8

Some students showed understanding that the author would have written the text differently but were unable to identify or describe, how.

Examples of student responses. Score = 0

There wouldn't be a happy ever after. Y8

the way he described Simon and the things Simon does. Y8

He would of made different story. Y8

2

Evaluating the impact of a poem on the readers' awareness of an environmental issue

Text: *Ecology*. C.K Stead⁸

The Year 8 students read a poem about the destruction of a natural habitat to develop a new sports field. The poem is implicitly critical of the destruction of this natural habitat. In the context of an interview with a teacher assessor the students were given the following task.

The writer wants his readers to think more deeply about the environment. Do you think he has achieved this? Explain why you think this. Use your opinions and evidence from the text to support your answer.

Student responses could score 0 or 1.



⁸ Stead, C. K. (2008). *Ecology*. In *C.K Stead Collected Poems, 1951-2006*. Auckland University Press.

2

Responses scored 1 if they provided evidence from the text to support their opinion.

Y8

Very much so, because when you're reading the first two sentences "Look there down in the bay where the blue heron is wading" you are thinking of the beautiful heron - if you know what a heron looks like - you're thinking of the beautiful blue heron wading around. And then there's the dump truck and bulldozer filling the edges with clay. And you suddenly think, "We're destroying where he or she is just wading around, living their life to the fullest - and suddenly* we're here. And we're just destroying that. And then it goes "Soon the mangroves will be gone and the heron will fly away" and it's like he's saying that the heron will be gone, and then there will be nothing. To say that the heron was there, nature was there. And then it like [reads out rest of the poem]. Yes.

* Note: Her use of the word 'suddenly' twice shows her awareness of the poet's use of contrast and undercutting the reader's expectations.

Yes I do because like if you were reading it just from the start, "Look there down in the bay where the blue heron is wading" you'd think "Oh, it's a nice happy poem about the environment. But then it goes like how the heron and the creatures have to move, and about how they have to go and leave their home and stuff. And when they go and say that, it makes you think about the environment and how actually, like what I'm doing is actually effecting us. Like it's not just effecting the trees - it's like also effecting the lives of animals. They have to move and they have to adapt, and that's hard.

Y8

Note: Gets the technique of contrast.

Just under three-quarters (72 percent) of the students scored 1.

Students who scored 0 tended to express their opinion without providing supporting evidence from the text or supported their opinion with only a very general reference to the text (e.g., "Yes, I think he has used words to catch our attention and makes us care" or "No I don't think he has because it wasn't long enough").

2

Analysing the representation of a film character, and the purpose of this representation

Video: *Mouse for Sale*. Wouter Bongaerts.⁹

Year 4 and Year 8 students viewed a short animation set in a pet shop about a mouse with larger than usual ears, trying to catch the attention of one of the customers—a young boy looking for a pet to buy. Another creature in the shop—a slater—mocks the mouse, each time his attempt to catch the boy’s attention fails. The mouse keeps persevering in the face of the bullying behaviour of the slater, and eventually succeeds.

The students were asked:

The slater (insect) appears a number of times in the film. Why do you think the film maker put the slater in the film?

Student responses could score 0, 1, or 2.

Responses scored 1 if they identified a reason for the inclusion of the slater related to the plot (e.g., 'to get the attention of the child', 'to annoy the mouse', 'so the mouse will throw the slater', 'to make the movie longer', 'to fill in time').

Examples of student responses. Score = 1

to help show the emotions of the other animals and to fill up space in the film.

Y8

it was the mouse's friend and it added in more characters to the short film

Y8

So when the mouse fails at his attempts of trying to use the peanut to attract the boy he gets angry and then uses the slater.

Y8

The limitation of these responses is that they suggest a lack of understanding that factors such as the plot or the length of the film are determined by the script writer for a particular purpose. The script writer is not at the mercy of the plot, which (according to the student responses above) somehow exists beyond their control.

⁹ Disney Favorite. (2013, April 16). *Mouse for Sale*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UB3nKCNUBB4>.

2

Responses scored 2 if they identified the purpose of the slater in relation to the film's main theme or message (e.g., 'that it is alright to look different', or that 'perseverance in the face of bullying behaviour gets its reward'); or identified the impact on the viewer (e.g., 'helping the viewer to feel connected to the mouse' or 'to empathise with the mouse').

Examples of student responses. Score = 2

to laugh at the mouse when he failed he is like a bulge in the real world and the mouse represents us if we fail we try again.

Y8

To help the audience sympathise with the mouse while he is being mocked.

Y8

Just over one-third (34 percent) of the Year 4 students scored 1, and only a very small proportion (5 percent) scored 2.

The Year 8 students found this question slightly easier than the Year 4 students did. Just under one half (42 percent) of the Year 8 students scored 1 and less than one-fifth (19 percent) scored 2.

Responses that scored 0 tended to provide reasons inconsistent with the evidence from the film, for example, 'so the mouse isn't lonely'. Others who scored 0 tended to make very generalised statements, such as 'to make it more interesting'.

2

Analysing the representation of picture book characters

Text: *Gorilla*. Anthony Browne.¹⁰
(Task name: *Orangu-tan and Chimpanzee*)

The Year 8 students viewed images from a picture book of a chimpanzee and an orang-utan looking sadly out at the reader from behind bars. The words beneath the images say, 'The animals are beautiful, but sad'.

Students were asked:

The illustrator wants you to know how animals feel about being in cages. What do you see that shows you this?

Student responses could score a 0 or a 1.

Responses that provided a logical interpretation with evidence from the text to support their answer scored 1.

Examples of student responses. Score = 1

They look really sad and lonely. You can see the bars in front of their faces saying they are in cages.

Y8

The lines that cut off the animals faces plus the animals facial expression.

Y8

Their facial expression, and their body placement

Y8

Only around one-third (33 percent) of the Year 8 students scored 1.

The responses that scored 0 tended to express students' interpretations of the animals' feelings, such as 'sad', 'depressed' or 'lonely', without describing how these feelings were portrayed in the illustration.

¹⁰ Browne, A. (Writer and Illustrator). (2014). *Gorilla*. Somerville, Mass: Candlewick Press.

2

The Year 8 students were also asked:

The animals look directly at the viewer. What is the effect of this?

Student responses could score 0 or 1. Responses scored 1 if they identified the effect as making the viewer feel connected to the animals, empathy for the animals, responsible for the animals, or guilt about animals being kept in cages.

Examples of student responses. Score = 1

Kind of looks like there asking
for help so it makes me
want to help them

Y8

It kinda makes you feel the monkeys
Pain.

Y8

Feel sorry for them and want to free
them.

Y8

It makes us feel worried for them.

Y8

it makes it ~~sim~~ look like they
know you are there

Y8

Less than half (43 percent) of the students scored 1. As with the question discussed above, responses that scored 0 tended to describe the feelings or needs of the animals (for example, 'They are not happy' or 'They need help', rather than describing the impact of the animals' direct stare on the viewer).

2

Summary for Insight 2

What do these findings illustrate?

These findings suggest that most students at Year 4 and Year 8 struggle with the concept that our creation and readings of text are not neutral or objective. We have points of view or perspectives that influence, either consciously or unconsciously, the ways in which we create texts and make meaning of them. These points of view or perspectives relate to our personal knowledge and experiences, our purposes, and to the social context in which we create or make meaning of text.

What can teachers do in the classroom?

Teachers can help students to develop the capacity to critically analyse texts, that is, critical literacy.

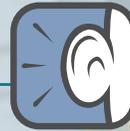
Teachers can do this by providing students with opportunities to explore the constructed nature of texts. This includes considering what is included and excluded from texts; how people, places, ideas, objects, and settings are represented; and how social inequities are perpetuated through text.

Teachers can also provide students with opportunities to explore the constructed nature of identity—how what we bring to the text (linguistically, culturally and ideologically) shapes our interpretation. Students need to listen, talk and write about these things.

Two early and widely used pedagogies incorporating critical literacy concepts include The New London Group's *Multiliteracies Pedagogy*, and Alan Luke and Peter Freebody's *Four Resources Model*. There are numerous international applications of these ideas to the classroom context.

There are also resources designed in the New Zealand context for teachers on critical literacy and critical multiliteracies. A good place to start is *Integrating critical multiliteracies using the Four Resources Model: A New Zealand Guide* by Jane Tilson and Susan Sandretto. This resource is based on research carried out in New Zealand classrooms and links critical literacy theories to practice. The resource includes a video of lessons in primary school classrooms and reflective interviews with the teachers involved.

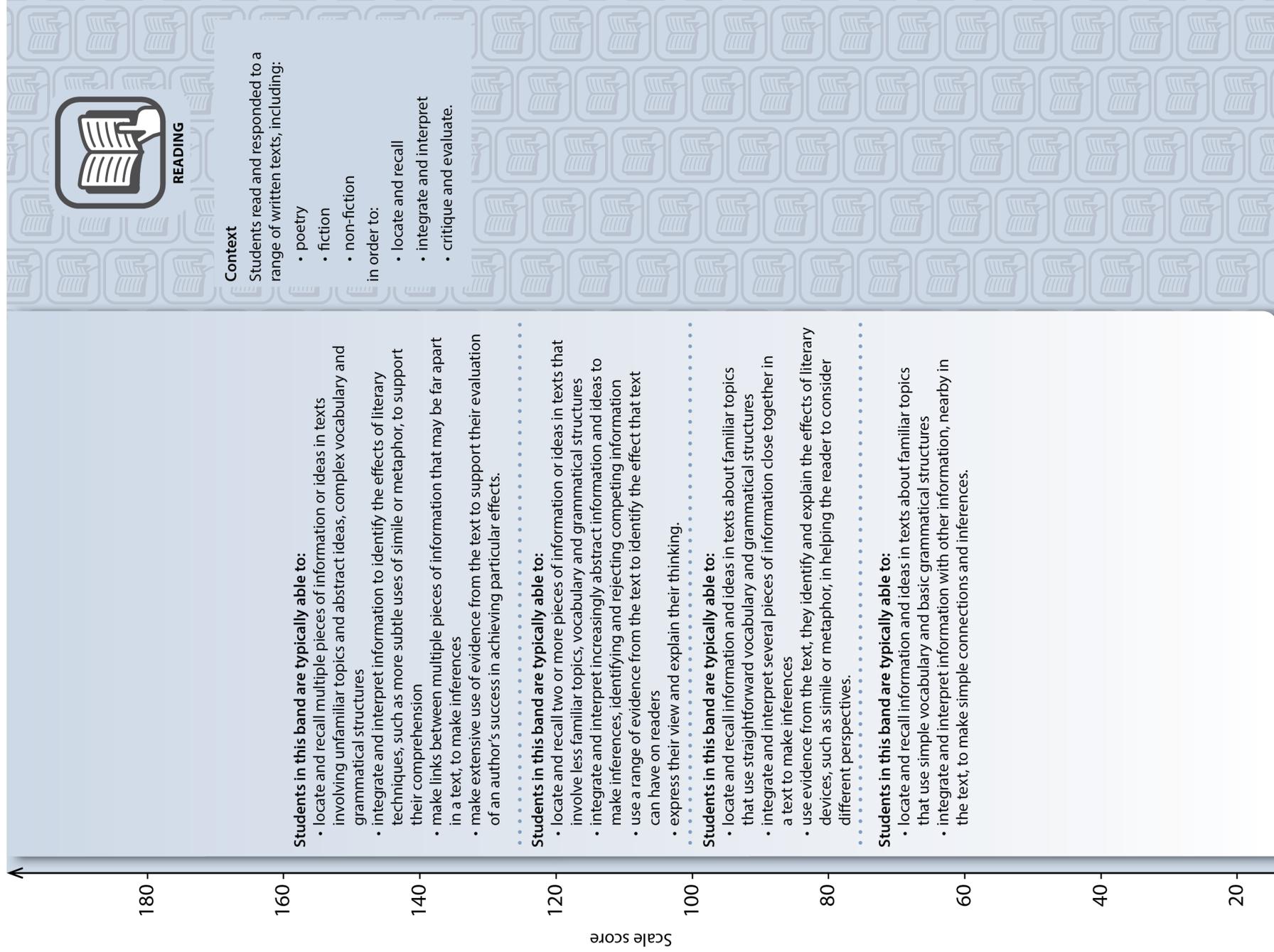
Appendix



Scales for reading, listening and viewing

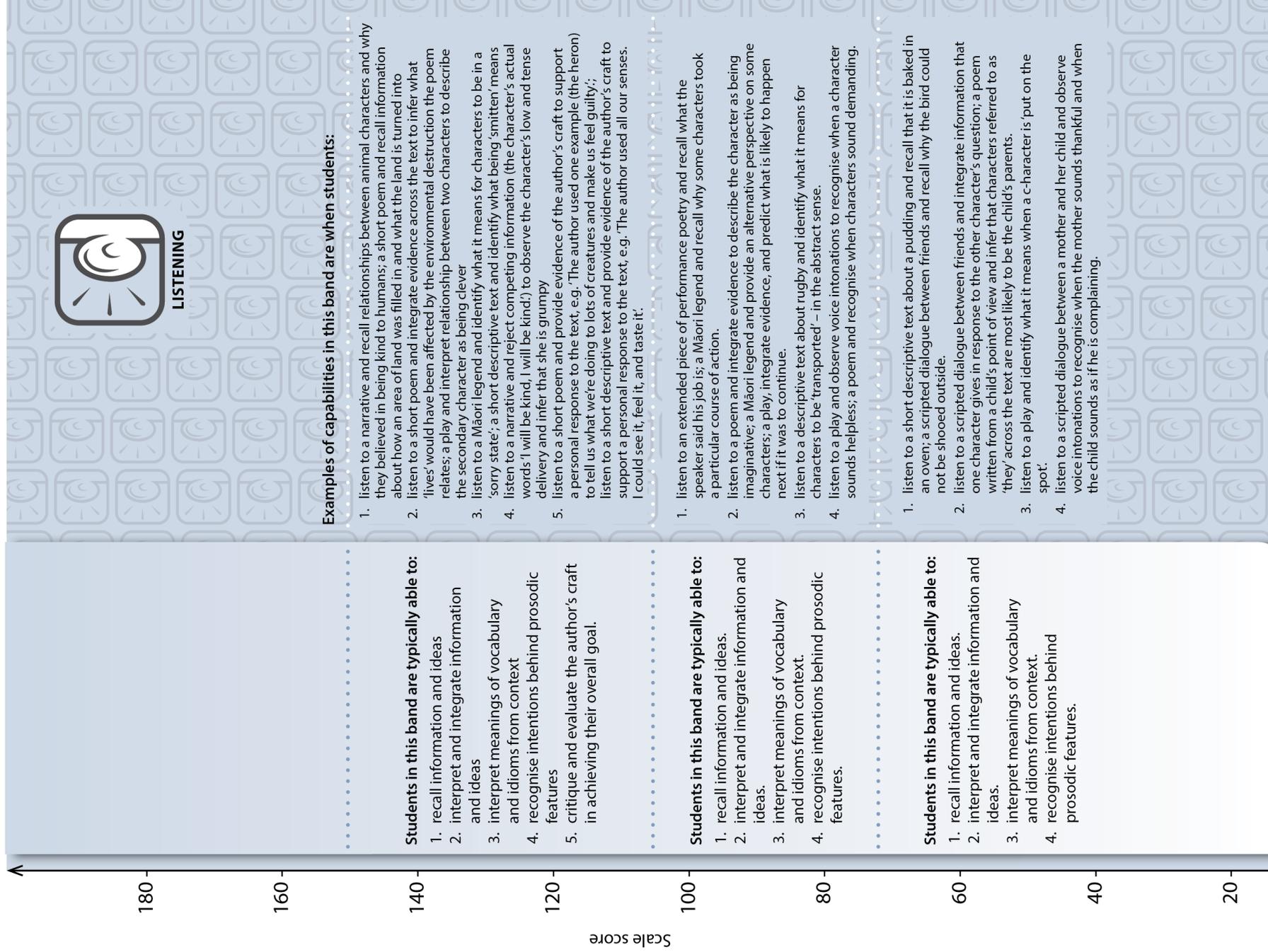


2019 NMSSA: Reading in the English Learning Area (RELA) Scale



Note: Descriptors in each band are non-hierarchical

Figure 1: A description of the Reading in the English Learning Area (RELA) scale



Note: Descriptors in each band are non-hierarchical

Figure 3: A description of the Listening in the English Learning Area (LELA) scale

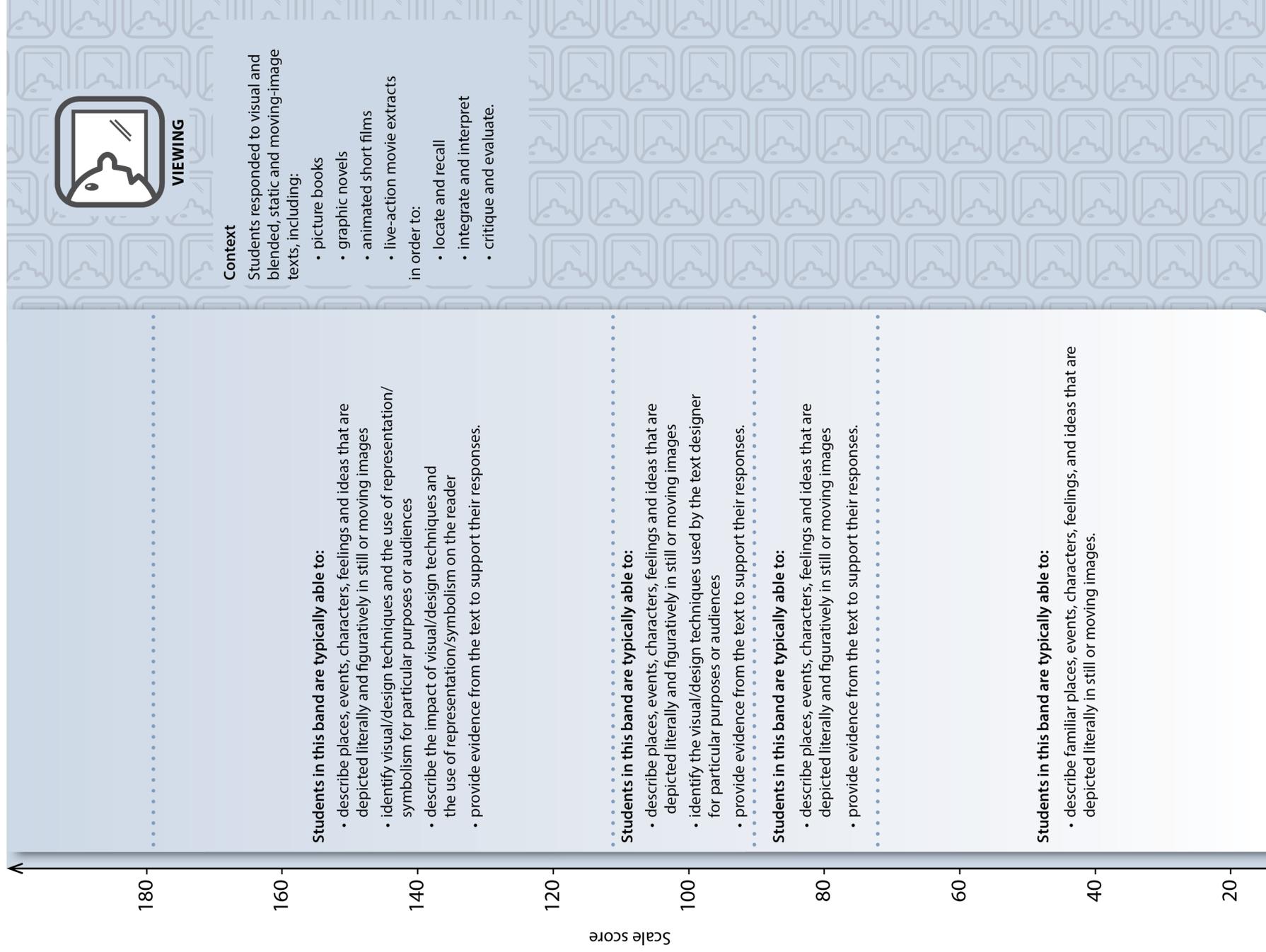


Figure 5: A description of the Viewing in the English Learning Area (VELA) scale



